

subjects of God's election, or rather if we are among the number who were fore-ordained before the foundations of the world, it is impossible that we should be lost, except by our own deliberate renunciation of Christ, for the gifts and callings of God are without repentance. If we but keep this one gate of the will, God undertakes the defense of our souls at every other point, and challenges earth and hell to pluck us out of his almighty hand. If we could only grasp this fact in all its beauty and power, much of our spiritual struggling, and many of our spiritual failures and defeats would come to an end. Let us keep that wonderful gate of the will always open to good influences, always open to the Holy Spirit, always open to every high purpose, and always shut, locked, bolted and barred to every suggestion of evil—let us do this and commit the rest to God, all our struggles, hopes, fears, sorrows, weaknesses, imperfections, and the result will be a certain victory, a sure election, and a perfect peace. As a faithful friend he will keep that which we commit to his care,—the priceless jewel of our soul, and its salvation.

Is it worth while to answer the oft repeated question, "How shall I know that I am one of the elect?" We would answer, "by this one sure sign, a *surrendered will*." A will yielding everything to God, or willing to yield everything to God, and nothing to the world, the flesh, and the devil. Theoretically there may be such a thing as falling from grace, but as a matter of fact it is generally, if not always, for the lack of grace. In such cases the will had not been surrendered to God. It had only been acting tentatively, it had only been experimenting with God. But even here we must not forget the proper discrimination between a willful and final renunciation of Christ, for which there is no repentance, and the falls of weakness, or indiscretion, or even carelessness, for which there is both repentance and recovery.

LONG PASTORATES.

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I am writing these few thoughts to stimulate deep and honest investigation of the above topic. Brethren and sisters, let us in a Christian way and for the good of all, discuss this subject. I will say only a small part of what *may* be said upon this question, and hope some one else will take up and continue the discussion. I fail to see any *Gospel* reason for the popular cry and the apparent growing demand for short pastorates. I can at this time look upon the short pastorate system as a

human weakness only. I do know that it is a sure and unmistakable index to weakness of pastor or people or both. The word pastor, or shepherd in our guide, the Gospel does not lead us into this false notion. A successful shepherd loses no gratifications as such, in becoming acquainted with the persons he has to administer to. He is no less able to reach the hearts of the children because he has performed the marriage and baptismal ceremonies of fathers and mothers, and because he has preached the funeral sermon of the dear dead ones. No! But because he has done all these, he ought to know their joys, their sorrows, their bereavements, their strength and their weaknesses, and therefore be the more able to be a real shepherd or pastor.

Then again. The idea that because a man has been engaged to *teach* God's word to the people and has been doing so for three years or one year successfully, unfits him for future teaching in the same place for the same people, is an erroneous idea, and is not applied to any other calling in life, such as physician, or lawyer, or teacher in the public school, or college, or University. There is no *Biblical* nor *common sense* reason why a successful pastor stationed with one congregation should be continually on the move, "running to and fro." Some one will say then, so long as this weakness exists on the part of the pastor and people, is it not the best thing to do to change pastors frequently? I would answer, not necessarily. I know of several congregations that have been most successfully built up from small and weak ones, to large and strong ones, both pastor and people being weak in the beginning. One great difficulty with the pastor and the people is, they lose sight of the object to be sought, he has a desire to become popular, to receive the applause of men, to be an orator, to make a livelihood. God pity the preacher who starts out with such an object in view. Then the little congregation has a strong desire to grow in numbers and in riches, to have the best looking and ablest pastor, all forgetting what Paul said. "He (God) gave some * * * pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints * * * for the *building up* of the body of Christ." Eph. 4: 11, 12.

The superlative need of the times now is, not more numbers, but more quality, "a perfect man," Paul said a completed man. Whenever pastor and people start out together with Christ as their captain, God as their Father, and the Word as their law, for the purpose of "the perfecting of saints," they will succeed in their object and many will unite with them in the work. Much of the weakness and

cause for the frequent changes of pastors is attributed to the faults of the pastors. Well, there are preachers who are like the ox, who think a change of pasture makes fat calves. This, however is the state of things more among the priests. But in this the prophecy of Daniel is coming to pass, where he says, "many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall increase." Dan. 12: 4. Where pastor and people are acquainted with each other, and understand each other, and all have the same purpose in view, and can work together agreeably, more good can be done by a continued work of the pastor. If the pastor is not able to be a shepherd, he should acquire ability. If he is not competent to teach God's word to one congregation, he should seek one where he *CAN*, and then "give himself wholly to the Word," and people and preacher aid each other in the work. The disposition on the part of the laity to always see and hear "*something new*" regardless of the truth, has wrought great havoc with some congregations, much to their sorrow and injury. The desire to speculate in pastors, is about as contagious as speculation in money and stocks or bonds. The disposition in the world and church to day, to "run to and fro," is because we have a desire to get something for nothing, and this may be applied to wealth, health, knowledge, faith, grace, love and virtue. There is much responsibility for the unrest and unsettled condition of pastor and people due to the unwise desire of the people. The laity are largely responsible for the character of the pastor. The prophet Hosea says, "Like people like priest." Hos. 4: 9. There is absolutely a lack of co-operation between people and priest and between all the people of God. "We are laborers together with God," Paul says. How can a pastor expect to succeed for more than about two or three years when a majority of the membership at the beginning say, whom will we secure next? Two years is about all the time we want him, and begin to lay plans for the present pastor's successor, when they ought to help with might and main for his successful work for the Master. Remember brother, that success in the Christian warfare depends upon the co-operation of people with pastor, and pastor with the people, and all co-operating with the great Head of all things. When the pastor refuses to work with the church, a change is the result, and vice versa.

To me it is indicative of prosperity when the churches hold pastors for some time, and a mark of weakness when frequent changes are demanded. We have said nothing about the extra expenses and inconveniences and discomforts incurred in a frequent removal.